DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 396 SP 041 319

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TITLE A Conceptual Model for Integrating Field Experiences, Professional Development Schools, and Performance Assessment in a World of NCATE 2000.

PUB DATE 2003-01-00

NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (New Orleans, LA, January 24-27, 2003).

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Partnerships in Education; *Performance Based Assessment; Portfolio Assessment; Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that with the new NCATE 2000 standards placing a major emphasis on performance assessment, particularly regarding the impact college and university teacher education programs have on learners, it is essential that teacher education programs develop evaluation plans that include reliable, valid assessments focusing on the performance of the learner rather than the teacher candidate. Teacher education programs have significantly increased the emphasis on field experiences in recent years and have further emphasized that these experiences occur in well-established Professional Development School (PDS) settings. The integration of field experiences, performance assessment, and PDSs is a complex process and requires both an organizational structure for teacher education programs and a mindset from faculty. Several key documents support the relationship between field experiences, PDSs, and performance assessment. This paper describes a conceptual framework, then offers ways to make the relationship between PDS participants more beneficial to all involved. It goes on to explain how to integrate field experiences into the total certification program and describes the importance of portfolios in conducting performance assessments. (SM)

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ED 472 396

A Conceptual Model for Integrating Field Experiences, Professional Development Schools, and Performance Assessment in a World of NCATE 2000

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2003

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A Conceptual Model for Integrating Field Experiences, Professional Development Schools, and Performance Assessment in a World of NCATE 2000

By
Dr. Wayne R. Fetter

A Paper Presented at the
55th Annual Meeting of the
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
January 24 - 27, 2003
New Orleans, Louisiana

Overview

With the new NCATE 2000 standards placing a major emphasis on performance assessment, especially regarding the impact college and university programs in teacher education have on the learner, it is essential that teacher education programs develop evaluation plans that include reliable, valid assessments that focus on the performance of the learner, rather than the candidate. Additionally, teacher education programs have significantly increased the emphasis on field experiences for their candidates in recent years and have further emphasized that these experiences take place in well-established professional development school settings. The old model where some faculty members teach methods courses while others supervise field experiences in multiple school sites and where candidates are evaluated on the basis of a listing of "good teaching practices" is no longer valid. The integration of field experiences, performance assessment, and professional development schools requires both an organizational structure for teacher education programs and a

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mindset from faculty. Field experiences must be integrated within the coursework expected of candidates and relevant to the advancement of their skills. Faculty teaching methods courses must have first-hand evidence that what they teach candidates has a direct and positive outcome for learners. With the movement toward performance assessment, teacher educators must develop relevant means of assessing performance of learners that can be attributed to the performance of candidates. As these assessments are generated, care needs to be taken to avoid overkill through "micro-assignments" that require too much and/or too many so that candidates, faculty, and mentor teachers are overburdened with paperwork. Active involvement and input of all faculty, including both the teacher education institution and the professional development school network, is vital. Each of these components must also be considered with regard to the conceptual framework and unit outcomes that guide all of the decisions made within the unit. The problem that arises, then, is one of integrating these three major components into a unified teacher education program.

The connection between field experiences, professional development schools, and performance assessment is obvious. Nonetheless, several key documents provide support to this relationship. In the Planning Instrument for NCATE 2000 Standards, Standard 3 states that "The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the

knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn." In the Preface to the draft document, *Professional Development Schools: An Implementation Manual*, developed by the Maryland Partnership for Teaching and Learning K-16 in the spring of 2001, the roles of PDSs were defined. The committee recognized a PDS as a partnership where "participants recognize a shared responsibility for the preparation of interns, the professional development of inservice teachers and administrators, improvement of all students' learning, and improvement in professional practice." The committee also stated that PDSs were "different from the traditional student teacher placement site, (and) offers interns successive experiences that build and integrate the foundation knowledge. The partnership ...insures alignment of curriculum with the practices that interns observe and participate in within the PreK-12 classroom." This view of the relationship between the college and its school partners is further supported by Target descriptors from Standard 3 of the NCATE 2000 Planning Instrument. According to NCATE, "field experiences allow candidates to apply and reflect on their content, professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a variety of settings with students and adults. Both field experiences and clinical practice extend the unit's conceptual framework(s) into practice through modeling by clinical faculty and well-designed opportunities to learn through doing. During clinical practice, candidate learning is integrated into the school program and into teaching practice...Candidates collect data on student learning, analyze that data, reflect on their work, and develop strategies

for improving learning." According to work done at Alverno College[1], "when candidates practice the abilities that will be demanded of them as teachers, and when we use assessment and feedback to help them develop these ideas further, assessment is a powerful tool to growth." The Alverno College faculty further stated that "performance assessment is not an add-on to business as usual. Focusing on what students can do with what they know transforms both the curriculum and approaches to teaching...In a program conceived of as the development of learners' abilities, the equation is changed. The parts begin to be seen as interrelated and interdependent; moreover, each part (learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessments, as well as courses) becomes open to examination in relationship to the performance of learners." It is obvious that assessment is integrally linked to learning experiences in classes and fieldwork and that there is an expectation to develop significant collaboration links between colleges of education and public schools.

The integration of field experiences, professional development schools, and performance assessment in an NCATE 2000 teacher education program is a complex process that demands that all relevant constituents work together with a willingness to develop significantly different structures and programs than those that previously existed. With both performance assessment and NCATE 2000 being extremely new sets of guidelines affecting the profession, the ideas put forth are an attempt to focus the future thinking of the profession and how

institutions may design/revise relevant programs that meet the exacting requirements our profession demands.

Conceptual Framework

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education defines a conceptual framework as "the underlying structure in the professional education unit that gives conceptual meanings to the unit's operation, and provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, faculty scholarship and service, and unit accountability."[2] This framework must be developed with relevant input from all constituents including, at a minimum, department of education faculty, university faculty from other departments having a stake in the teacher education program, and public school faculty and administration. Once developed, the conceptual framework must be widely disseminated to and clearly understood by all relevant stakeholders in the teacher education program. Also, the conceptual framework should be clearly evident in *every* phase of the teacher education program, as indicated in the NCATE definition. It is imperative that course syllabi, intern and other field experience evaluation forms, course assignments, field experiences, and any other part of the program be directly related to and consistent with the conceptual framework.

Professional Development Schools

All too often, colleges and departments of education have perceived the role of the Professional Development School (PDS) to be one of a consistent

location for the placement of interns and candidates involved in early field experiences within their program. The prevalent practice appears to be one in which the benefits to the university are obvious and plentiful, but where the benefit to the school is often nebulous. In effective PDS networks, both university and public school exist in a truly symbiotic relationship, where the benefits to both are obvious. The following are offered as suggestions for ways to make the relationship more beneficial to both parties:

(1) Develop a PDS Advisory Council comprised of the Department of Education's Coordinator of Field Experiences, unit faculty who has responsibility for both methods courses and field experience supervision, building-based administrators (either the Principal or Assistant Principal from each PDS), PDS faculty, and the district supervisor for Human Resource Development or Staff Development.

(2) Utilize the PDS Advisory Council to disseminate the Conceptual Framework throughout the PDS network. The council also provides a useful way for the university to conduct needs assessment when looking to develop new programs and/or majors. More importantly, the PDS Advisory Council allows the university to receive information from school faculty, administrators, and the staff development office regarding inservice needs. The university can then offer and/or develop relevant courses and workshops to either

individual schools or districts based on what is needed, rather than what university professors may desire to teach.

(3) Utilize regular faculty from the university, who are also responsible for teaching methods courses, to supervise field experiences. Assign one faculty member to each PDS and establish a mailbox and workspace for the university faculty member at the PDS.

(4) The university should offer courses, at both the graduate and undergraduate level, on-site at the PDS. This would make taking courses easier for public school teachers and provide an opportunity to utilize either the facilities or personnel in the PDS, including students, in relevant ways.

(5) Courses and other opportunities should be designed to provide specific, direct service to the PDS. For example, a diagnostic reading course in which students from the PDS are identified, and candidates from the university learn to administer, score, and report results from a variety of reading assessments. The final project could include developing a comprehensive report that is submitted to the university instructor for a grade and to the PDS for assistance in diagnosing student needs. The PDS could also offer an after-school tutoring program in mathematics where teacher education candidates provide the tutoring for which they receive training and credit.

(6) The university could reserve a faculty position within the department of education for a "visiting instructor." This instructor would be a faculty member from one of the PDSs selected after an application and interview process. The school district would hire a one-year permanent substitute, with funds shared by the district and the university, to fill this teacher's classroom. The teacher would assume a full-time faculty load within the department of education at the university. This may also lead to a system whereby a university faculty member trades assignments with a classroom teacher from a PDS for a year. The one-year appointment as a visiting instructor would be a sabbatical-type situation for the public school teacher in which they could receive graduate credit for preparing and teaching college level courses. With the experience of training older learners, the teacher could also become an effective inservice trainer for the school district. The university benefits by having faculty teaching its' candidates who have recent and substantial public school experience.

(7) Involve teacher education candidates in training and inservice provided at the PDS. For example, in two of our PDSs, teachers are trained in a program called Read and Succeed (RAS). Any teacher education candidates assigned to these two schools also

receive formal training in RAS, and then work with students from the PDS to provide this service.

Field Experiences

No longer can we expect field experiences to be an add-on to the regular teacher certification program. It is imperative that field experiences be an integral part of the total program. Field-based assignments must be closely related to the conceptual framework and the objectives of the program. Processing of assignments and experiences in the schools must be regularly accomplished within the courses candidates are taking, and the relationship between the theory presented in class and the practice of the field must be evident. Candidates must also engage in meaningful reflection of how the experiences impact their development as future teachers. As already mentioned, these field experiences need to be supervised by the same education faculty who provide the course instruction. Faculty who are regularly assigned supervision will be better able to revise coursework and integrate relevant experiences and concept teaching into the courses they teach. For example, a faculty member teaching a course in tests and measurements could assign candidates a field-based project where they are required to interview the school counselor to determine the types of assessments used by the district and then review the cumulative file of a student from the classroom in which they are placed. As part of the course assignment, a diagnostic assessment of the individual student could be developed and shared with the mentor teacher from the PDS to assist in

planning instruction for the student and submitted to the course instructor for a grade. If we assume that the conceptual framework of the teacher education program includes items related to collaboration, diagnosis, and assessment of student performance, an assignment such as this one could be very relevant. The more the university develops field experience requirements that both meet individual course requirements and provide relevant data and/or assistance to the faculty, administration, and students in the Professional Development Schools, the better the symbiotic relationship between university and PDS. As more field experiences are developed that provide both a training component for the teacher educator and candidate and relevant data for the PDS, the easier it will be for the PDS administration and faculty to perceive themselves as equal partners with the university faculty in the preparation of the next generation of teachers.

Performance Assessment

As mentioned earlier, the shift to performance assessment that emphasizes the performance of the learner as a result of the teacher education program is a significant departure from the way programs and their candidates used to be assessed. It is no longer valid to peruse course syllabi and make a subjective judgment about whether significant and appropriate outcomes are being addressed by the teacher education program; we must now prove that our candidates have mastered these outcomes....and that the outcomes selected by the teacher educators do have a positive impact on learners. Additionally, if field

experiences are successfully integrated within the teacher education program, it follows that a significant number of outcomes will be validated by performance assessed in the field. One of the best ways of providing these assessments is through the use of portfolio development by teacher education candidates. Portfolio entries need to include products that clearly demonstrate that the candidate can *perform* required outcomes, not only that they have been exposed to a concept in a course. Candidates need to be able to clearly reflect upon what they have learned and *how that concept impacts what they do in a classroom of learners*. Portfolios also need to include examples of learner products that clearly show that students can perform what was taught them by the teacher education candidate. Since these performance assessments need to be connected to the program outcomes as established by the conceptual framework, one of the most difficult issues concerns identifying *appropriate* assessments, determining where in the program (within a particular course or field experience level) they fit, and ensuring that redundancy does not occur. Stakeholders in the teacher education program need to determine a specific set of assessments related to the program and, if part of a specific course, required of all candidates taking that course, even if multiple sections of the course are taught by different instructors. These key assessments need to have consistent assignment descriptions, including the relationship to the conceptual framework, and rubrics or tools used to provide consistency in scoring regardless of who does the scoring. The unit should regularly collect copies of the assignments,

scoring tools, data related to statistical analysis indicating how candidates performed, and samples of high and low quality assignments from candidates. These artifacts can then be stored in a document room and used for ongoing program evaluation.

Candidate portfolios should consist of both required key assessments and free choice items. Again, stakeholders representing the teacher education program should determine what key assessments would be required. These key assessments should reflect the ability of the candidate to *perform* according to the conceptual framework of the program and show growth of the candidate as he/she progresses from entry level to completion. Obviously, both course assignments and field experience activities need to be required. Candidate portfolios provide an excellent opportunity to gather and display the work of students being taught by teacher education candidates during internships or other field experiences. As an example, a teacher education intern might be required to develop a five-day unit plan as a key assessment for the program. After teaching the unit during internship, the candidate administers a unit exam to his/her students. Included in the candidate's portfolio would be a copy of the unit plan, unit exam, scoring tool, data analysis of student results on the exam (mean, median, range, etc), and copies of good and poor exams.

Possibly the biggest issues related to performance assessment artifacts deal with the questions of "how much is enough?" and "who chooses?" It appears that we must walk a fine line between being overly prescriptive and

allowing so much freedom of choice that we fail to assess key candidate and/or student performance. Care needs to be taken so as to not overburden the mentor teacher in the professional development school setting with so many teacher education program requirements that it obstructs the normal flow of activity in that teacher's classroom. Teacher education candidates must be assessed based on their ability to meet the outcomes delineated in the conceptual framework, but not overburdened with so many assignments (How many unit plans are enough? How many lesson plans? Is it necessary to require that every elementary education major prepare a set number of lesson plans *by subject matter taught* in order to demonstrate competence in short range planning?) so that they lose focus of their final objective.

The benefit of involving all relevant stakeholders from the beginning is obvious here. If stakeholders representing the department of education, other departments of the university affected by the education program, administrators and faculty from the professional development schools, and others affected by the program are included in the total process of conceptual framework development, program revision and refinement to align with the conceptual framework, and key performance assessment selection, then this shared ownership should lead to widespread support of the program.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, it was suggested that the old teacher education model was no longer valid and that the mindset of university faculty in

teacher education programs also needed new direction. Much like Peggy Blackwell has suggested,[3] the focus of teacher education needs to be on students and learning, rather than teachers and teaching. Reading Dr. Blackwell's article in Phi Delta Kappan, it seems that the NCATE 2000 standards, when combined with the movements toward real professional development schools and performance assessment, would provide an appropriate framework in which we could make this change in focus.

[1]Alverno College Faculty. (1994) *Student assessment-as-learning at Alverno College*. Milwaukee, WI: Alverno Productions.

[2]NCATE Handbook for Initial Accreditation Visits (Draft copy), November 1, 2000. Washington, D.C.: NCATE. P. 3.

[3]Peggy J. Blackwell, "Student Learning: Education's Field of Dreams," *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 2003, pp. 362-367.

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